

# The Rev. Poor pursued activism throughout life

BY CAROLE BEERS  
*Seattle Times staff reporter*

The Rev. George Lester Poor, a Seattle Methodist minister and anti-war activist, didn't court trouble but didn't hide from it, either.

During World War II, when churchgoers threatened to run him out of town for counseling fellow conscientious objectors, he continued to preach peace and inclusion in whatever pulpit or draft-counseling chair he was occupying.

In peacetime, when the Rev. Poor was counseling a woman on marital problems, her husband met him at the door with a rifle. But the Rev. Poor calmly walked past him into the home and worked with both partners on their problem.

Years later, when the wife died, the husband insisted the Rev. Poor officiate at her funeral because, he said, "You're the only one who really understood us."

The Rev. Poor died Sunday (Jan. 30) of pneumonia. He was 90.

Born to a minister and his wife in Portland, he earned a bachelor's degree in theology from Willamette University and a doctorate in theology from Boston University. He and his first wife, Margaret, were married in 1931.

While at graduate school in Boston, he pastored at a church in Norfolk, Mass. Subsequently, he served at University Park Methodist Church in Portland before moving to Camas, Clark County, in 1940. In 1946, the Rev. Poor moved to Seattle and pastored at Trinity Methodist Church for the next 10 years.

Margaret Poor died in 1951. The reverend married the former Penelope Marshall in 1952, with his father officiating.

"He and Penelope were very much a team," said the Rev. Poor's son Robert Poor of Seattle. "His political and social activism had a great impact."

Starting in 1958, the Rev. Poor worked in Chimacum, Jefferson County, where he combined two congregations and built a church.

From 1962 to 1966, he served

in Ellensburg and then returned to the Seattle area to pastor at River-ton Park United Methodist Church in Tukwila.

He counseled draft resisters, led peace rallies, worked with the Church Council of Greater Seattle and was active in the Fellowship of Reconciliation. He also chaired the Seattle Religious Peace Action Coalition. In 1972, the Rev. Poor was a delegate to the General Conference quadrennial meeting of world Methodism, a high honor in his religion.

He has said that while some of his sons were conscientious objectors, one chose to enter the military, "and we loved and supported each in his decision."

After retiring in 1973, the Rev. Poor moved into his wife's childhood home in the University District of Seattle. Dedicated to organic gardening, he landscaped the yard to include her favorite trees and flowers.

In the late 1980s, he served as interim pastor at Capitol Hill Methodist Church, rescuing the church from closure and making its gay parishioners feel welcome in the larger Methodist community.

Also surviving are the Rev. Poor's children Philip Poor and Alice Flegel, both of Seattle, and Ralph Anderson of Shelton, Mason County; a brother, Clarence Poor, of Berkeley, Calif.; sisters, Sarah Hallin of Eugene and Frances Brown of Georgia; nine grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren. Penelope Poor, the reverend's wife, died in December.

Services will be at 11 a.m. Feb. 19 at Trinity United Methodist Church, 6512 23rd Ave. N.W., Seattle. Donations may go to the Fellowship of Reconciliation, 225 N. 70th St., Seattle, WA 98103.

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